



Iran

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Protect civilians at Camp Ashraf and ensure accountability for violation of international humanitarian law

An international and independent investigation must be carried out into the attacks on civilians living in Camp Ashraf on 8 April where Iraqi authorities are bound by international humanitarian law to cease all forms of violence against camp residents, said the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LDDHI) in a joint press release today. Residents of the camp have ‘protected persons’ status under the Fourth Geneva Convention. FIDH and LDDHI strongly condemn the attacks, the latest in a series since 2009.

In early morning on 8 April, the Iraqi Army stormed Camp Ashraf in North-Eastern Iraq, home to about 3,500 members of the People's Mojahedeen Organization of Iran (PMOI), an opposition group to the Iranian regime. Independently verifiable figures of casualties are not available as access to the camp is heavily restricted by the authorities. Representatives of the PMOI said over 300 residents were wounded and 33 killed, including eight women, in the latest assault. The US military also reported that it has been denied permission to provide humanitarian assistance to camp residents. Access by journalists is reportedly also restricted.

"The Iraqi government has clear obligations under international humanitarian law and its own law to protect civilians at Ashraf, including ensuring their unfettered, safe and immediate access to humanitarian assistance, especially adequate medical care," said Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President. "Restriction on access must be lifted now and efforts must be made to identify those responsible for violation of national and international law, who must be brought to justice in a court of law for their crimes," she added.

Since January 2009, when the US military handed jurisdiction over the camp to Iraq, the Iraqi authorities have launched a series of interventions at the camp with excessive force, killing and injuring residents, who were stripped of their weapons following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The US State Department stated in 2009 that the Iraqi authorities gave assurances that "any actions that they took at Camp Ashraf would be consistent with humane treatment of the individuals there, and that they would not relocate any of the individuals there to a country where they would have a well-founded fear of persecution."¹

"The systematic intimidation of and assault on residents of Camp Ashraf contradict Iraq's own commitments before the international community," said Ms Belhassen. "The US and the UN also have a responsibility to take proactive measures to protect civilians, in light of the Iraqi authorities' increasing belligerence towards the camp and their seeming total disregard for international law," she further stressed.

Karim Lahidji, vice-president of FIDH and President of the LDDHI said: "Under international law, the Iraqi government

is responsible for protecting the lives of the Camp residents. We condemn the attacks and call for an impartial international inquiry into the events at Camp Ashraf."

For more FIDH information on Iraq, please visit: <http://www.fidh.org/-Iraq->

<http://www.fidh.org/Protect-civilians-at-Camp-Ashraf-and-ensure>